

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SAIGON IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, VS

SUBJECT: NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLES

FOR CHARGE FROM EA/VN.

1. FOLLOWING IS FULL TEXT OF 20 AUGUST NEW YORK TIMES
ARTICLE BY SHIPLER. WOULD APPRECIATE MISSION COMMENTS
ASAP FOR POSSIBLE USE ON HILL.

BEGIN TEXT

PARA AFTER TWO DECADES OF FRATRICIDAL WARFARE THE GOVERN-
MENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM HAS BEEN LEFT WITH A LEGACY OF
CORROSIVE SUSPICIONS DIRECTED IN LARGE MEASURE AGAINST ITS
OWN CITIZENS. PARA THE CHIEF INSTRUMENT AND REPOSITORY
OF THESE SUSPICIONS IS THE POLICE APPARATUS. IN A WAR
IN WHICH THE ENEMY CANNOT ALWAYS BE SEEN, THE POLICE
STRUCTURE TENDS TO SEE HIM EVERYWHERE, ATTRIBUTING TO
HIM IMMENSE, ALMOST SUPERHUMAN POWERS OF DEVIOUSNESS AND
PERSUASION. PARA THIS ATTITUDE, WHICH HAS FUELED THE
SYSTEM OF ARREST, TORTURE AND IMPRISONMENT IN SOUTH
VIETNAM, WAS DEFINED RECENTLY BY A HIGH-RANKING OFFICER
OF THE SPECIAL BRANCH OF THE NATIONAL POLICE, WHICH IS
RESPONSIBLE FOR COPING WITH VIET CONG INFILTRATORS IN THE
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CIVILIAN POPULATION. PARA THE COMMUNISTS, HE EXPLAINED

DURING A CONVERSATION, SCHEME TO GET ONE FAMILY MEMBER
AFTER ANOTHER ON THEIR SIDE. THEY WOO THEM ONE BY ONE,

USING THOSE WHO HAVE COME OVER TO SEND FIRST A LETTER, THEN PERHAPS A LITTLE MONEY TO LURE THE REST OF THE FAMILY ACROSS THE IDEOLOGICAL LINE. PARA STUDENTS ARE VERY VULNERABLE, HE OBSERVED, GESTURING WITH HIS CIGARETTE. WE HAVE CAUGHT STUDENTS HAVING SECRET MEETINGS. THEY ORGANIZE SPORTS CLUBS AND THEY HOLD WEEKEND RETREATS "WHERE THEY SING FORBIDDEN SONGS -- NORTH VIETNAMESE SONGS;" PARA HE PORTRAYED THE COMMUNISTS AS MASTERS OF INFILTRATION WHO PENETRATE THE RANKS OF DISSIDENTS AND EVEN OF THE POLICE. OFFICERS, HE SAID, HAVE TO WATCH THEIR OWN MEN VERY CAREFULLY. PARA ASKED IF HE THOUGHT THERE WERE ANY OPPONENTS OF PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU WHO WERE NOT COMMUNISTS, HE REPLIED WITH AN EMPHATIC NO. THEY ARE ALL COMMUNISTS, HE SAID, AND AS FOR ASSERTIONS THAT THEY ARE MERELY NEUTRALISTS OPPOSED TO THIS GOVERNMENT, "IT'S JUST A COVER." PARA SO THERE IS NOT MUCH ROOM FOR OTHER VOICES IN SOUTH VIETNAM NOW. PRESIDENT THIEU SAID AS MUCH APRIL 14 WHEN HE DECLARED IN A SPEECH THAT "THE 19.5 MILLION SOUTH VIETNAMESE PEOPLE SHOULD BE WELDED INTO A MONOLITHIC BLOC, MOTIVATED BY A SINGLE ANTI-COMMUNIST IDEAL." PARA "ONLY A BUNCH OF TRAITORS" CONTENDING THAT THE SUPPOSEDLY NEUTRALIST "THIRD FORCE" WAS A CREATION OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT, HE TOLD HIS AUDIENCE: "THE SO-CALLED THIRD FORCE IS ONLY A BUNCH OF TRAITORS TO THE MOTHERLAND AND HENCHMEN OF THE COMMUNISTS AND COLONIALISTS." PARA A GROUP OF 301 ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTS REPLIED TO THIS IN A STATEMENT PLANNED FOR A JUNE NEWS CONFERENCE THAT THE POLICE SEALED OFF AND PREVENTED FROM TAKING PLACE. "THE ANTI-COMMUNIST CAUSE HAS BECOME A PADLOCK TO SHUT THE MOUTH OF THE PEOPLE," THE PRIESTS DECLARED, "BECAUSE EVERY HELPLESS CITIZEN MAY BE ACCUSED OF CONNIVANCE WITH OR ASSISTANCE TO COMMUNISTS." PARA TO MANY FORMER PRISONERS WHO HAVE UNDERGONE POLICE INTERROGATION, MR. THIEU'S VIEW OF DISSENT SEEMS GENUINE, NOT MANUFACTURED TO EXCUSE ARREST. THE INTERROGATORS, THEY SAY APPEAR TO BELIEVE QUITE SINCERELY THAT THE STUDENT OR THE WRITER

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IN QUESTION WROTE AS HE DID OR SPOKE AS HE DID ONLY TO HELP THE COMMUNISTS. PARA FOR EXAMPLE, A JOURNALIST WHO WAS ARRESTED AFTER HE WROTE NEWSPAPER ARTICLES ABOUT MY LAI MASSACRE, THE USE OF DEFOLIANTS AND THE ANTI-PERSONNEL BOMBS DROPPED BY THE UNITED STATES IN NORTH VIETNAM GAVE THIS ACCOUNT OF HIS INTERROGATION BY THE POLICE: PARA "THEY ASKED ME, 'WHAT COMMUNIST ORGANIZATION ARE YOU WORKING UNDER?' I SAID THAT I'M NOT IN ANY COMMUNIST ORGANIZATION, THAT I'M NOT ACQUAINTED WITH COMMUNISTS, I ONLY WRITE THESE ARTICLES THAT OPPOSE THE

WAR. THEY SAID THAT THEY DID NOT BELIEVE ME AND STARTED APPLYING ELECTRODES TO THE LOBES OF MY EARS. PARA

"CERTAINLY I MUST BE IN A COMMUNIST ORGANIZATION, THEY SAID, 'WHY WOULD YOU HAVE WRITTEN SUCH ARTICLES IF YOU WERE NOT IN A COMMUNIST ORGANIZATION?'" PARA "OPPORTUNISTS, AN OFFICER SAYS" A YOUNG OFFICER WHO WORKS IN A PROVINCIAL RECONNAISSANCE UNIT -- PART OF THE SPECIAL BRANCH -- SAID THAT HE WAS CONVINCED THAT MOST DISSIDENTS SOUGHT COMMUNIST SUPPORT NOT NECESSARILY OUT OF IDEOLOGY BUT OUT OF OPPORTUNISM: "THEY WANT TO ELEVATE THEMSELVES IN CASE SOME DAY THERE IS A COALITION GOVERNMENT," HE SAID. PARA HE WENT ON TO TALK FEARFULLY OF A RECENT NORTH VIETNAMESE PROGRAM TO SEND CIVILIANS INTO THE SOUTH TO FARM ABANDONED LAND IN VIET CONG-CONTROLLED AREAS. THE DANGER, HE EXPLAINED, IS INTERMARRIAGE. THE COMMUNISTS WOULD TRY TO INTERMARRY WITH PRO-COMMUNISTS AND THE PRO-COMMUNISTS WITH NON-COMMUNISTS, SO COMMUNISM WOULD SPREAD RELENTLESSLY, HE SAID, SPEAKING AS IF IT WAS A HEREDITARY DISEASE OR A DREADED RACIAL DEFECT. PARA FAMILIES OF COMMUNISTS THUS BECOME TARGETS OF SUSPICION. THEY ARE ARRESTED FREQUENTLY, NOT JUST FOR THEIR SUPPOSED PRO-COMMUNIST SYMPATHIES BUT ALSO FOR THE INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION THEY ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE ABOUT VIET CONG ACTIVITIES. PARA A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN FROM HUE, THE MOTHER OF SEVEN, DESCRIBED BEING ARRESTED THREE TIMES, BEATEN, INTERROGATED AND HELD FOR THREE OR FOUR MONTHS EACH TIME IN THE YEARS AFTER HER HUSBAND, A PROFESSOR OF LITERATURE AT HUE UNIVERSITY, LEFT IN 1968 TO GO WITH THE VIET CONG. PARA THE LAST TIME, IN APRIL, 1972, SHE SAID, SHE WAS FORCED TO SIGN A PROMISE UNCLASSIFIED

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TO GATHER INTELLIGENCE. "I SIGNED," SHE SAID. "I WAS AFRAID OF BEING BEATEN, I WAS VERY FEARFUL. THEY SAID, 'IF YOU DO NOT REPORT WITH INTELLIGENCE YOU CAN BE ARRESTED AGAIN.'" THIS HAUNTED HER, SHE EXPLAINED BECAUSE SHE HAD NO INTELLIGENCE TO PROVIDE. SHE IS REQUIRED TO REPORT TO THE POLICE MONTHLY. PARA "UNABLE TO GET A JOB" "THE WHOLE THING IS SUCH A PRE-OCCUPATION WITH ME THAT I CAN'T DO ANYTHING," SHE SAID. "I CAN'T WORK. EVEN PRIVATE AGENCIES ARE AFRAID TO GIVE ME WORK--AFRAID THEY MIGHT BE IMPLICATED, AFRAID THEY MIGHT BE ARRESTED." PARA FOR ANOTHER FAMILY THE TROUBLE BEGAN WHEN THE FATHER, PROF. TON THAT DUONG KY, WHO HAD BEEN ARRESTED BY THE FRENCH COLONIAL RULERS AND THEN AGAIN UNDER THE GOVERNMENT OF NGO DINH DIEM, SIGNED AN ANTI-WAR PETITION IN 1965. HE WAS IMPRISONED AND THEN, WITH SEVERAL OTHER INTELLECTUALS WHO HAD SIGNED THE PETITION, WAS FORCED ACROSS THE DEMILITARIZED ZONE INTO EXILE IN THE NORTH. HE NOW HEADS A COMMUNIST

ORGANIZATION. PARA SINCE HIS EXILE, HIS WIFE SAID, FIVE OF HIS NINE CHILDREN--MOST ARE IN THEIR TWENTIES, AND ONE IS A 14-YEAR-OLD GIRL -- HAVE BEEN ARRESTED,

SOME MORE THAN ONCE. A SON, NGUYEN PHUOC QUYNH TIEN, 18, WAS BEATEN TO DEATH IN PRISON, HIS MOTHER SAID. AND, SHE ADDED, NGUYEN THI QUE LANG, 25, A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW, WAS ARRESTED, BEATEN, SUSPENDED BY HER ARMS FROM THE CEILING AND TORTURED WITH ELECTRIC SHOCK, THEN LEFT IN PRISON FOR FIVE YEARS. PARA IN THE PRISONS THEMSELVES ARE OBSESSION OF DEFINING SOUTH VIETNAMESE CITIZENS AS PRO-GOVERNMENT OR PRO-VIET CONG FOCUSES ON ONE SYMBOL: THE THREE THIN RED STRIPES ON THE YELLOW FIELD THAT FORM THE FLAG OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH VIETNAM. PARA "WILL YOU SALUTE THE FLAG?" THE QUESTION IS ASKED WHEN THE PRISONER ARRIVES IN CHI HOA PRISON IN SAIGON. THE ANSWER IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE. TO THE PRISON OFFICIALS IT REPRESENTS LOYALTY OR DISLOYALTY, PATRIOTISM OR TREASON, ALTHOUGH STUDENTS SAY THEIR REFUSAL TO SALUTE IS A PROTEST AGAINST THE INJUSTICE OF THEIR ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT. PARA "IN THE 'MOVIE ROOM'" EVERY PERSON INTERVIEWED WHO HAD SERVED TIME IN CHI HOA TOLD THE SAME STORY: UPON REFUSING TO SALUTE THE FLAG, UNCLASSIFIED

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HE WAS PLACED FOR PERIODS OF A DAY OR TWO TO A WEEK OR TWO IN THE MOVIE ROOM, A CELL ABOUT 18 BY 24 FEET, LIT DIMLY BY A SINGLE BULB. PARA "IT WAS VERY DIRTY," NGUYEN VIET TUAN, PRESIDENT OF A STUDENT GROUP CALLED THE YOUNG CATHOLIC WORKERS, SAID. "THERE WERE URINE AND EXCREMENT ON THE FLOOR; YOU COULDN'T BREATHE. IT WAS FULL OF MOSQUITOES." PARA MOST PRISONERS HAD ONE LEG SHACKLED TO AN IRON BAR THAT RAN THE LENGTH OF THE CELL A FEW INCHES ABOVE THE FLOOR. SOMETIMES, FORMER PRISONERS SAID, THE MOVIE ROOM CONTAINED A DOZEN OR MORE PEOPLE, SOMETIMES ONLY THREE OR FOUR. PARA "IF WE WERE SHACKLED BY THE LEGS AND WE PROTESTED," SAID NGUYEN XUAN HAM, ANOTHER STUDENT LEADER "THEN THEY WOULD SHACKLE OUR HANDS AS WELL, OR CROSS THE LEGS AND THEN SHACKLE THEM OR SHACKLE YOU FACE DOWN -- THAT WAS THE WORST." THE SHACKLED PRISONERS PASSED AROUND A WOODEN BOX USED AS A TOILET. "IF YOU WERE LUCKLY IT WOULD BE FAIRLY CLEAN," MR. HAM SAID, "BUT IF IT WAS OLD, URINE WOULD LEAK OUT ALL OVER WHERE YOU WERE LYING." PARA FOR MANY THE REFUSAL TO SALUTE WAS A MATTER NOT OF IDEOLOGY BUT OF PRINCIPLE THAT THEIR CAPTORS COULD NOT COMPREHEND. THE JOURNALIST WHO WAS ARRESTED FOR HIS ANTI-AMERICAN ARTICLES RECALLED HIS CONVERSATION WITH A PRISON OFFICIAL SEVERAL DAYS AFTER THE SIGNING OF THE PARIS CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT IN 1973. PARA "YOU DO NOT AGREE TO SALUTE THE FLAG," THE OFFICIAL DECLARED. "YOU MUST BE A COMMUNIST." PARA "NO, I AM NOT A COMMUNIST,"

WAS THE REPLY. "I WAS A JOURNALIST AND I ENGAGED IN NO ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES. THIS GOVERNMENT ARRESTED ME, AND THAT FLAG IS A SYMBOL OF THE GOVERNMENT THAT

ILLEGALLY ARRESTED ME, SO HOW CAN I SALUTE THAT FLAG? IF THEY WANT ME TO SALUTE THE FLAG THEY MUST RELEASE ME--THEN I WILL SALUTE IT." PARA HAS HE SALUTED IT SINCE HIS RELEASE LAST OCTOBER? "FROM THE TIME I WAS SMALL," HE ANSWERED SLOWLY, "I LIVED IN SAIGON, AND ALL THAT TIME I SALUTED THE FLAG. ALL THAT TIME I WAS NOT A COMMUNIST. NOW I DO NOT KNOW. NOW NO ONE ASKS ME." PARA SOME SOUTH VIETNAMESE SEE A SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY IN THE GOVERNMENT'S COMPULSION TO LABEL OPPONENTS AS COMMUNISTS. A PROMINENT CIVILIAN UNCLASSIFIED

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JUDGE, FOR INSTANCE, DECLARED IN A RECENT INTERVIEW THAT NO MATTER WHAT THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY, MARTIAL LAW "CAN REACH TOO MANY INNOCENTS AND TRANSFORM THESE INNOCENTS INTO COMMUNISTS BECAUSE THEY ARE ANGRY AGAINST THE UNJUST MEASURES TAKEN AGAINST THEM." PARA SOME STUDENT DISSIDENTS HAVE GONE OVER TO THE COMMUNIST SIDE, FRIENDS SAY, USUALLY OUT OF FEAR OF ARREST OR RE-ARREST. IT IS NOT AN EASY DECISION. IT MEANS LEAVING A FAMILY AND ACCEPTING A POLITICAL LABEL WITH WHICH FEW SEEM COMFORTABLE. MANY STAY BEHIND, LIVING IN A KIND OF UNDERGROUND WORLD, SLEEPING EACH NIGHT IN THE HOME OF A DIFFERENT FRIEND, HOPING TO KEEP ONE STEP AHEAD OF THE POLICE. PARA "YES, I MAY GO TO THE OTHER SIDE," SAID A YOUNG MAN RECENTLY RELEASED FROM PRISON WHO IS LIVING UNDERGROUND. "A FRIEND, ARRESTED AT THE SAME TIME, HAS GONE. IF I LOSE MY MORALE, PERHAPS I WILL GO. BUT I'M NOT A COMMUNIST. THERE ARE CERTAIN PARTS OF COMMUNIST POLICY THAT I DON'T ACCEPT. WE ARE PACIFISTS. WE ARE AGAINST THE FIGHTING." PARA "A CONFLUENCE OF VIEWS" HE IS A MILITANT BUDDHIST AND A FORMER STUDENT LEADER WHO HELPED ORGANIZE CAMPAIGNS IN THE LATE NINETEEN-SIXTIES IN WHICH AMERICAN VEHICLES WERE BURNED IN SAIGON AS A PROTEST AGAINST THE AMERICAN MILITARY PRESENCE. NOW HE WANTS TO SEE PRESIDENT THIEU OUT OF OFFICE. ONLY THEN, HE SAYS, CAN THE PARIS AGREEMENT'S GUARANTEE OF DEMOCRATIC LIBERTIES AND GENERAL ELECTIONS BE REALIZED. PARA ON THESE TWO ISSUES -- THE AMERICANS AND THE PARIS AGREEMENT -- HE AND MANY OTHER OPPONENTS OF MR. THIEU SHARE A COINCIDENCE OF VIEWS WITH THE COMMUNISTS. BUT IT WAS WITH SOME DISGUST THAT HE RECALLED BEING LOCKED IN THE SAME CELL WITH A DOZEN VIET CONG POLITICAL CADREMEN AT TAN HIEP PRISON. PARA "THEY WERE INFERIOR CADRES," HE SAID WITH DISDAIN. "I DIDN'T DISCUSS SERIOUS THINGS

WITH THEM. THE BUDDHISTS DO NOT LIKE FOREIGNERS. THE BUDDHISTS DO NOT ACCEPT FOREIGN IDEAS, MARXIST OR CAPITALIST." THUS HE, LIKE MANY OF HIS COLLEAGUES, IS LEFT SUSPENDED BETWEEN TWO SIDES, PRACTICING HIS POLITICS CLANDESTINELY AND WITH LITTLE SUCCESS. PARA THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT SEEM PERTURBED TO HAVE SUCH

OPPONENTS GOING PHYSICALLY TO THE COMMUNISTS. DURING THE
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PRISONER EXCHANGES THAT ENDED IN MARCH THE GOVERNMENT
RELEASED TO THE VIET CONG A NUMBER OF PRISONERS WHO DENIED
THAT THEY WERE COMMUNISTS. SOME REFUSED TO GO. THESE
INCLUDED TWO PROMINENT OPPONENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT--TRAN
NGOC CHAU, A FORMER PARLIAMENTARY DEPUTY AND A FRIEND OF
MANY AMERICAN ADVISERS, AND HUYNH TAN MAM, FORMER
PRESIDENT OF THE SOUTH VIETNAM STUDENT UNION. PARA
THEY WERE OFFERED FREEDOM ON THE SAIGON SIDE IF THEY
WOULD AGREE TO GO THROUGH THE OPEN ARMS PROGRAM, WHICH WAS
DESIGNED FOR COMMUNISTS DEFECTORS. BUT THEY REFUSED ON
THE GROUND THAT THIS WOULD BE TANTAMOUNT TO MAKING THE
CONFESSIONS THAT THEY HAD RESISTED FOR SO LONG. MR.
MAM REMAINS IN JAIL; MR. CHAU WAS RELEASED ON JUNE 5
ON THE CONDITION THAT HE ENGAGE IN NO POLITICAL
ACTIVITIES. ANOTHER, NGUYEN LONG, AN AGING ANTIWAR
LAWYER WHO HAS DEFENDED MANY DISSIDENTS, WAS FORCED TO
THE VIET CONG SIDE DESPITE HIS OBJECTIONS. PARA
"ISOLATION AS A TACTIC" THOSE WHO REMAIN IN GOVERNMENT
AREAS FIND THEIR POLITICAL ACTIVITIES SHARPLY CURTAILED
AND UNDERMINED BY WHAT THEY CALL SKILLFUL POLICE ACTION.
WHERE A MOVEMENT DEPENDS ON A FEW LEADERS, THEY SAY, THE
LEADERS WILL BE TAKEN. BUT WHERE THE ARREST OF THE
LEADERS IS LIKELY TO PROVOKE DEEPER PROTEST, AN ATTEMPT
IS MADE TO ISOLATE THEM BY THREATENING OR ARRESTING
LESSER FIGURES AROUND THEM. PARA THAT IS THE SITUATION
OF HO NGOC NHUAN, A ROMAN CATHOLIC OPPOSITION DEPUTY
IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. HE IS FREE TO DENOUNCE THE
GOVERNMENT, BUT HE SAYS HE HAS GREAT TROUBLE HOLDING
MEETINGS WITH POLITICAL ALLIES OR CONSTITUENTS. PARA
WITH REGULARITY THE POLICE SURROUND HIS OFFICE AND REFUSE
TO LET ANYONE IN FOR A SCHEDULED MEETING, HE
COMPLAINED; ON OTHER OCCASIONS, THE POLICE HAVE USED THE
INTIMIDATING TACTIC OF PHOTOGRAPHING THOSE WHO VISIT HIS
OFFICE. PARA "EVERY TET," MR. NHUAN SAID, REFERRING TO
THE LUNAR NEW YEAR, "I MAKE A CALENDAR. I SEND THEM TO
MY CONSTITUENTS IN SAIGON, AND WHEN I GO TO VISIT THEM
THEY INVITE ME INTO THEIR BEDROOMS TO SHOW ME THAT THEY
DO HANG MY CALENDAR ON THE WALL, BUT IN THE BEDROOM."
PARA AFTER HIS VISITS, HE SAID, HIS CONSTITUENTS ARE IN
TURN VISITED BY THE POLICE, WHO ASK ABOUT THEIR TAX PAY-

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MENTS, THEIR JOBS AND THE LIKE. "THEY INVITE THEM TO
THE POLICE STATION SEVERAL TIMES," HE SAYS, "MAKING IT
DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO CARRY ON THEIR DAILY LIVES." PARA
THE POLICE ALSO HAVE THE POWER TO KEEP ANY CANDIDATE OFF

THE BALLOT BY FILING A NEGATIVE REPORT ON HIM WITH THE ELECTION COMMISSION. PARA ACCORDING TO DOCUMENTS OBTAINED BY THE NEW YORK TIMES, TWO INCUMBENTS ON THE BAC LIEU PROVINCE COUNCIL WERE DENIED PERMISSION TO RUN FOR RE-ELECTION IN JULY ON THE BASIS OF A POLICE REPORT THAT ACCUSED THEM OF BELONGING "TO A GROUP OPPOSED TO THE ADMINISTRATION." PARA THE TWO--ONE IS NAMED TA VAN BO, THE OTHER REQUESTED ANONYMITY--WERE ALSO REPORTED TO HAVE "CONTACTED THE AN QUANG BUDDHIST BLOC TO PARTICIPATE IN A SECRET MEETING." ALSO FROM THE POLICE REPORT: PARA "THEY BOTH CONTACTED THE OFFICE OF FORMER LIEUT. GEN. DUONG VAN MINH AND RECEIVED DOCUMENTS CRITICIZING THE COURSE OF THE GOVERNMENT. THE GENERAL IS AN OPPONENT OF PRESIDENT THIEU." PARA THERE ARE OTHER EFFECTIVE POLICE TACTICS SHORT OF ARREST. FOR EXAMPLE, WRITERS IN DISFAVOR RARELY FIND PUBLISHERS WILLING TO TAKE RISKS. KY NINH, ONCE THE MANAGING EDITOR OF A SAIGON NEWSPAPER NOW OUT OF BUSINESS, DID FIND A WILLING PUBLISHER, ONE OF THE FEW WHO HAVE HIRED HIM IN THE FOUR YEARS MR. NINH HAS BEEN OUT OF PRISON. PARA "HE ASKED ME TO HELP HIM ORGANIZE THE EDITORIAL STAFF," MR. NINH SAID. "I WARNED HIM THAT THE GOVERNMENT DOESN'T WANT ME TO DIRECT ANY EDITORIAL STAFF, BUT THE PUBLISHER INSISTED ON HIRING ME. I WORKED 13 DAYS. ON 10 OF THOSE 13 DAYS THE PAPER WAS CONFISCATED BY THE GOVERNMENT." PARA NOW, TO EARN MONEY, HIS WIFE SELLS KEROSENE AND FISH SAUCE IN THE MARKET PLACE AND AS FOR MR. NINH--"I'M ASHAMED TO SAY THIS BUT IT'S TRUE--I CARRY PASSENGERS ON MY BIKE." PARA "POLICE TECHNIQUES DESCRIBED" STUDENTS ALSO DESCRIBED SOPHISTICATED POLICE METHODS BY WHICH ANTIWAR AND ANTI-THIEU MOVEMENTS HAVE BEEN DRIVEN UNDERGROUND, FRAGMENTED, INTIMIDATED AND--THE MOST CANDID CONCEDE--RENDERED VIRTUALLY IMPOTENT. PARA "THE POLICE TAKE OFF THEIR UNIFORMS AND REGISTER AS STUDENTS, AND WHO CAN TELL THE DIFFERENCE?" SAID NGUYEN VAN NGOC, A LANKY YOUNG STUDENT LEADER ON THE RUN FROM THE POLICE. PARA HE AND OTHERS SAID THAT THE POLICE UNCLASSIFIED

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ROUTINELY INFLUENCED STUDENT ELECTIONS BY ARRESTING ANTI-GOVERNMENT CANDIDATES AND MAKING SURE THAT PRO-GOVERNMENT STUDENTS FILLED FACULTY EXECUTIVE COUNCILS, BODIES THAT CAN TAKE POSITIONS ON NATIONAL ISSUES AND COMMAND WIDE AUDIENCES. PARA BEFORE THE ELCTION THIS SPRING AT THE

UNIVERSITY OF CAN THO, THE POLICE JAILED SOME OF THE CANDIDATES AND THE REST, ABOUT 25, WENT INTO HIDING, ACCORDING TO NGUYEN DUC DUNG, STUDENT CHAIRMAN OF THE UNIVERSITY'S COMMITTEE OF REPRESENTATIVES. PARA ONE APPARENT REASON FOR THE POLICE ARREST, MR. DUNG SAID, WAS THAT THE STUDENTS HAD BEGUN DISCUSSING TWO DANGEROUS TOPICS--THE COUNTRY'S SEVERE ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES AND

THE AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION THAT ALLOWS PRESIDENT THIEU TO RUN FOR A THIRD TERM. PARA HOWEVER, MR. NHUAN, THE CATHOLIC OPPOSITION DEPUTY OBSERVED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD ALSO BEEN CONCILIATORY ON OCCASION, ESPECIALLY WHEN A STUDENT DEMAND ENJOYS BROAD PUBLIC SUPPORT. SUCH WAS THE CASE SOME MONTHS AGO WHEN A NEW NATIONWIDE ORGANIZATION OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS MADE AN APPEAL FOR A CHANGE IN THE LAW COVERING STUDENT DRAFT DEFERMENTS. THIS CAME SHORTLY AFTER STUDENT UPRISINGS HAD TAKEN PLACE IN THAILAND AND SOUTH KOREA. MR. NHUAN SAID, AND THE GOVERNMENT AGREED TO THE CHANGE WITHIN A WEEK. PARA "THE UNENDING WAR" MANY OPPONENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT WHO HAVE BEEN ARRESTED LIKE TO THINK THAT WITHOUT THE POLICE PRESIDENT THIEU WOULD FALL FROM POWER. BUT THERE ARE FACTORS BESIDE THE POLICE THAT STABILIZE THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT. ONE IS THE WAR ITSELF, WHICH STILL POLARIZES THE POPULATION, FEEDING THE TENSION IN THE COUNTRY AND GIVING THOSE WHO HATE AND FEAR THE COMMUNISTS ONLY ONE PLACE TO GO. PARA SOME POLITICIANS WHO COUNT THEMSELVES AMONG THE OPPOSITION BUT ARE NEVERTHELESS STRONGLY ANTI-COMMUNIST SAY THEY HAVE TEMPERED THEIR CRITICISM OF MR. THIEU BECAUSE THEY DO NOT WANT TO WEAKEN THE NON-COMMUNIST SIDE FURTHER AT A TIME WHEN THE AMERICAN WITHDRAWAL HAS MADE IT MORE VULNERABLE TO THE VIET CONG NAD NORTH VIETNAMESE. PARA IN ADDITION, THE DISSIDENTS DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO THE ELECTORAL PROCESS. THE CONTROL OF THE PRESS; THE ABSENCE OF ANY STRONG PUBLIC FIGURE TO POSE A UNCLASSIFIED

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NEUTRALIST ALTERNATIVE; THE DIFFICULTY OF ASSEMBLING A POLITICAL PARTY WITH ENOUGH MEMBERS, CHAPTERS AND VOTES TO MEET THE GOVERNMENT'S STRICT REQUIREMENTS--ALL OF THESE FRUSTRATE THE DISSIDENTS' DESIRE FOR CHANGE, AS SURELY AS THE THREAT OF ARREST, TORTURE AND IMPRISONMENT DOES. PARA MANY OF THOSE WHO OPPOSE PRESIDENT THIEU LAPSE INTO EMBARRASSED SILENCE WHEN ASKED TO NAME AN ALTERNATIVE. THEN THEY INSIST THAT ANOTHER MAN WOULD EMERGE IF THE COUNTRY HAD A TRULY FREE POLITICAL LIFE. PERHAPS, BUT THERE IS NO GALLUP POLL IN SOUTH VIETNAM, NO WAY OF SCIENTIFICALLY TESTING THE ASSUMPTION OF THE DISSIDENTS THAT MR. THIEU IS UNPOPULAR. PARA FURTHERMORE, THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT A CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT

WOULD BRING POLITICAL FREEDOM. THE COMMUNISTS--AND EVEN THE DISSIDENTS WHO CLAMOR FOR A FULLY OPEN SOCIETY--WOULD NOT SURPRISE MANY SOUTH VIETNAMESE IF, AFTER GAINING POWER, THEY MERELY PUT DIFFERENT PEOPLE IN JAIL. END TEXT

2. THERE FOLLOWS FULL TEXT OF A NON-BY-LINE INSIDE PAGE STORY ON "CON SON: TIGER CAGES TO BUFFALO PENS".

WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR COMMENTS.

BEGIN TEXT

PARA "ABOUT 5 A.M. DEC. 26 WE WERE HANDCUFFED TOGETHER AND TRANSFERRED TO A SHIP, NO. 504, ABOUT 450 OR MORE PRISONERS. WE WERE PUT INTO THE HOLD OF THE SHIP, SHACKLED TO BARS. THERE WERE FOUR POLICEMEN GUARDING US. PARA "AT 6 THE NEXT MORNING WE ARRIVED AT CON SON. WE HAD ONLY ONE SMALL BOWL OF RICE TO EAT AND A PIECE OF SUGAR. WE WERE KEPT ON THE SHIP UNTIL 3:30 P.M. WITH NOTHING TO EAT." PARA SO NGUYEN VIET TUAN, A STUDENT, DESCRIBED HIS TRANSFER FROM CHI HOA PRISON IN SAIGON IN 1972 TO CON SON, A PRISON ISLAND 60 MILES OFF THE COAST IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA. PARA TO VIETNAMESE CON SON HAS LONG BEEN A DREADED NAME. FOR AMERICANS IT WAS PROPELLED INTO INFAMY IN 1970, WHEN MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS AND THEIR AIDES VISITED THE PRISON AND DISCOVERED THE SO-CALLED TIGER CAGES--CELLS UNCLASSIFIED

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TOPPED WITH IRON GRILLWORK IN WHICH PRISONERS WERE SHACKLED AND MISTREATED. PARA THE TIGER CAGES HAVE BEEN REPORTED ABANDONED, AND RECENT VISITORS SAY THAT SOME HAVE BEEN DEMOLISHED. PRISONERS RELEASED WITHIN THE LAST YEAR TELL OF ANOTHER KIND OF PUNISHMENT CELL -- BUFFALO CAGES MADE FROM FORMER STABLES, INTO WHICH PRISONERS ARE JAMMED AND SHACKLED ALSO. PARA "IT WAS SO CROWDED THAT WE COULD NOT MOVE AND THEY SHACKLED OUR LEGS," SAID NGUYEN XUAN HAM, A STUDENT LEADER RELEASED LAST OCTOBER. "THE CELLS THEMSELVES ARE NOT WHAT IS SO TERRIBLE--WHAT IS TERRIBLE IS THE POLICY THERE." PARA "THEY USE COMMON CRIMINALS TO GUARD US, AND THEY HAVE ABSOLUTE CONTROL," HE SAID. "THEY WOULD DO ALL KINDS OF THINGS. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO TELL JUST HOW TERRIBLE IT WAS. ONE PERSON I SAW BEATEN AND KILLED. THERE IS NO BREEZE, NO AIR. IT WAS REALLY TERRIBLE." PARA "STORIES CONFIRMED" SEVERAL OTHER PRISONERS, MOST OF WHOM ASKED TO REMAIN UNIDENTIFIED, GAVE IDENTICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF THE BUFFALO CAGES AND EXPLAINED THAT PRISONERS WERE PLACED THERE FOR REFUSING TO SALUTE THE FLAG. PARA DESPITE REPEATED ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE

GOVERNMENT AND A PLEDGE ON THE CBS-TV PROGRAM "FACE THE NATION" ABOUT A YEAR AGO, PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU HAS YET TO ALLOW NEWSMEN TO VISIT CON SON. SEVERAL SCHEDULED TRIPS HAVE BEEN CANCELED. PARA SOME CONGRESSIONAL AIDES DESCRIBED A TIGHTLY CONTROLLED GUIDED TOUR IN WHICH THEY SAW PRISONERS ONLY OUTSIDE OR IN A WOODWORKING SHOP, NOT IN CELLS. PARA FORMER PRISONERS DESCRIBE OTHER LESS WELL-KNOWN PRISONS IN GRUESOME TERMS. TRAN TUAN NHAM, FOR EXAMPLE, SPENT

SOME TIME AT TAN HIEP PRISON UNTIL HE WAS RELEASED IN
MARCH. PARA "IN THE DRY SEASON," HE SAID, "IT WAS
REALLY STUFFY INSIDE THE CELLS. IN THE RAINY SEASON
WATER WOULD COME INTO THE CELLS, AND WHEN THAT HAPPENED
WE COULD NOT LIE DOWN AND GO TO SLEEP. WE WOULD HAVE
TO STAND AND HOLD OUR THINGS IN OUR HANDS. IT WOULD
LAST ABOUT TWO HOURS AFTER A HEAVY RAIN. WHEN IT DRAINED
OFF WE WOULD HAVE TO SCRAPE MUD OFF THE FLOOR." PARA
THERE WERE SEVERE HEALTH PROBLEMS, HE ADDED, AND THE
FOOD WAS INSUFFICIENT. PARA "EACH PERSON GETS ONE BOWL
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OF RICE, NO MORE," HE SAID. "IT IS THE KIND OF RICE IF
YOU WERE HERE IN SAIGON YOU WOULD BUY TO RAISE PIGS
WITH--BROWN RICE IN THE HULL, AND RAT DROPPINGS IN IT."
END TEXT. INGERSOLL

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